DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 376 CE 052 799

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TITLE	A Handbook on Home-School Collaboration.
INSTITUTION	Massachusetts State Dept. of Education, Quincy. Office of Community Education.
PUB DATE	88
NOTE	50p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Office of Community Education, Massachusetts Dept. of Education, 1385 Hancock Street, Quincy, MA 02169.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Student Relationship; Parent Teacher Conferences; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Participative Decision Making
IDENTIFIERS	Massachusetts

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet provides an overview of current research on home-school collaboration and strategies that schools can use to develop partnerships with their students' parents or guardians. An introduction lists the benefits of increasing parent involvement (higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievement, positive attitudes and behavior, more successful programs, and more effective schools). Section 1 describes three approaches to parental involvement (influencing parent-child interaction at home; involving parents in specific programs within the school; and creating a systematic and comprehensive relationship between parents, the school, and the community). That section also states research findings concerning each of the approaches and discusses the role of the educator in home-school partnerships, the role of the school, and critical issues in parent involvement. Section 2 suggests strategies that can be grouped into five categories (home-school communication, parents as supporters, parents as teachers, parents as learners, and parents as advisors and decision-makers). This section also includes strategies to involve the hardest-to-reach parents (parents who work outside the home, low-income parents, single parents, divorced parents without custody, and parents of minority race or language). Section 3 describes 12 parent involvement programs in Massachusetts. The document concludes with a 24-item bibliography. (CML)

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A HANDBOOK ON HOME-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

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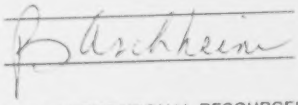

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6M-5/88-804821
Est. Cost Per Copy $ 36

A HANDBOOK ON
HOME-SCHOOL COLLABORATION

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INTRODUCTION

Research over the past few years has clearly demonstrated that the family plays a critical role in its children's success in school. Parental involvement in education is related to short term gains and to long term academic success. This notion of the family as educator is not new. What is new is the growing understanding that the responsibility for children's school performance must be a shared responsibility. It is essential that more attention is paid to how schools and families can work together to help educate children.

The evidence on the impact that relationships between schools and families have on children's success is compelling on its own merit. However, research shows that not only does parent involvement help children improve, it helps make schools better. Schools that welcome the involvement of parents and other community members outperform other schools. Parent involvement, therefore, has several important reasons to recommend it!

A summary of some of the more important research findings related to increasing parent involvement shows:

- higher grade and test scores
- long-term academic achievement
- positive attitudes and behavior
- more successful programs
- more effective schools

The benefits of increasing parent involvement in education are clear for educators and parents. It is no wonder that national attention has increased its focus on the development of home-school partnerships.

This pamphlet provides an overview of current research and strategies that schools can use in further developing home-school partnerships. It is divided into four sections.

Section One — provides an overview of current research and discusses the role of educators and school systems in enhancing parent involvement.

Section Two — describes successful parent involvement strategies in the five major parent involvement categories.

Section Three — documents twelve examples of successful parent involvement strategies in Massachusetts.

Section Four — provides a list of source references and resources on which this pamphlet is based.

SECTION ONE
WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

APPROACHES TO PARENT INVOLVEMENT

There are three major approaches to parent involvement:

- *those that seek to influence parent-child interaction in the family setting*
- *those that seek to involve parents in specific programs within the school*
- *those that attempt to create a systematic and comprehensive relationship between parents, the school, and the larger community.*

1. The Parent-Child Interaction at Home

Research indicates that involving families in their children's education through activities that occur outside of the school setting can be very beneficial for students. These activities generally involve:

1. influencing family behaviors which positively affect children's performance in school
2. helping parents learn how to engage in home activities which support children's learning
3. providing additional networks of support for parents

Many parents, particularly single mothers and families with two working parents, find it difficult to be involved in school-based activities and are responsive to these "doable" forms of parent participation.

Studies on parent involvement through parent-child interaction reveal that:

- Parents who encourage positive attitudes toward school and who have high expectations for their children's success in school have a profound impact on their children's achievement. This observation holds true across all social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.

- Parents of children whose background places them "at risk" can be taught skills or behaviors that reinforce a positive cycle of development for their children. This training for parents involves helping them develop skills in home-teaching and home-reinforcement techniques.

- By reading to children and enforcing rules about homework and television, parents can positively impact their children's school performance.

- Strengthening informal and formal social supports for parents can help significantly to influence their children's academic success. These supports can include providing lists of addresses and phone numbers of other parents and hosting community based discussion groups for parents.

2. School Program Approach

The second major mode of involving parents is through school-based programs. It has been clearly established that direct parent participation in school-based programs or activities is significantly related to student involvement. This involvement may occur through parent components of existing efforts, such as Chapter I programs, or by creating school-based programs specifically for training parents to work with their children. It is also valuable to have parents involved in the daily life of the school as paraprofessionals, or in tutoring, mentoring, or other volunteer roles.

3. Comprehensive Approach

Another approach to parent involvement incorporates parent participation into every aspect of children's educational life. The school works to involve parents in many roles: as teachers at home, as volunteers in the school, as paraprofessionals, as supporters, as decision makers, and as adult learners. Additionally, an emphasis is placed on the relationship between the school, the parent, and the larger community. The Follow-Through Programs, which seek to systematically assist parents in playing a number of roles in relation to their children's education, school, and community, demonstrate that better planned, more comprehensive, and longer lasting parent involvement in schools correlates highly with the effectiveness of these schools as institutions serving their communities.

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATOR

Many children live in one-parent homes, reconstituted or blended families, foster homes, extended families, and a variety of other "non-traditional" situations. While it is often assumed that children do not have positive developmental and learning experiences in single-parent families or in families with two parents working outside the home, research does not support these assumptions. No achievement differences are found between children from alternative family structures and those children from "traditional" families when socioeconomic status is taken into account. In order to work effectively with parents, educators need to understand the realities of family life and not be limited by misconceptions and stereotypes about differing family constellations.

Lower socioeconomic status is related to less parent participation in education. Race and limited English language proficiency are disproportionately related to low socioeconomic status which also correlates highly with low academic achievement. Educators should not conclude, however, that only middle and upper class parents want to be partners with the schools. Schools must be creative in learning how to be partners with parents who are single, working, from different class and cultural backgrounds, or who speak limited English. Parents want their children to succeed and children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents in the process.

To take the lead in developing home-school partnerships, educators will need to challenge some of their own misconceptions about parents and family structures. Educators must believe in the importance of involving parents and schools must take the initiative in assisting parents to work with them. The practices of the school and the degree to which parent involvement is valued by educators will make the difference in whether parents are helped to be constructive partners with schools for their children's education.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

It is up to the schools to take the initiative in organizing meaningful relationships with parents and assessing the extent to which they support parent involvement. Most schools encourage parents to play some role in the school, particularly that of supporter. Too often, however, parents are excluded from having real influence in the decision-making that affects the educational life of their children.

Existing participatory mechanisms are often controlled by professionals and do not provide parents with meaningful involvement in key aspects of school management. Parent apathy, especially at the secondary school level, is usually related to a lack of power, not to a lack of interest. In work-

ing toward school-parent collaboration, schools must demonstrate a genuine commitment to recognizing the rights and roles of parents as co-creators of children's educational experiences.

CRITICAL ISSUES IN PARENT INVOLVEMENT

While leadership at the school level is important in building parent involvement, it must be supported at all educational levels in the community, the state, and the nation. This support would help to:

- educate the public about the importance of the family as educators
- train teachers to work more closely with families
- provide resources and training on home-learning techniques to all parents
- provide ways for families to help and support each other
- explore ways to involve other community resources in working with parents and children on educational issues

In order to facilitate meaningful parent involvement that improves schools, school principals, teachers, and other educators must advocate for public policies that encourage and make possible parent participation.

SECTION TWO
STRATEGIES FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Schools are seeking to involve parents using a variety of strategies. These strategies may be grouped into five major categories:

- **home-school communication**
- **parents as supporters**
- **parents as teachers**
- **parents as learners**
- **parents as advisors and decision makers.**

Schools that are trying to institute a comprehensive parent involvement relationship are developing strategies from all five of these categories.

1. HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Home-school communication is the foundation for all other forms of parent involvement. This communication involves one and two-way exchanges of information and perspectives with parents. Although time consuming and often difficult, this communication is absolutely essential in establishing basic relationships with parents. Schools can help parents actively support their children by communicating with parents on the following topics:

- the school mission
- the discipline policy
- the homework policy

- school regulations such as health, physical education, promotion, etc.
- steps to take when parents have concerns or questions
- appropriate school telephone numbers

It is also helpful when schools provide parents with information on grade-level learning goals and on how parents can become involved in school-based activities. This "one-way" flow of information often is sent to parents in school handbooks and newsletters. An additional example of one-way communication are the report cards and comments that teachers send to parents.

Parent-school relationships can be improved when there is an increase in the level of two-way communication among parents and the school or the individual teacher. Too often, most parents hear from school personnel only when their child is in trouble. Increasing the number of personal communications with parents that include positive contacts and solicit parent input indicates to parents that the school welcomes and values their involvement.

Strategies to Increase Communication with Parents

Newsletters — Send to parents regular newsletters which include information about what is happening within the school and provide discussion on topics that may be of concern to parents such as the discipline policy, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Some newsletters also contain mini-surveys on topical issues, with parents' feedback published in later editions.

Wall Calendars — Attractive wall calendars distributed to parents list school holidays, in-service days, special events at the school, and lists of key school phone numbers.

Progress Reports — "Half and half" progress reports enable teachers to complete the top half and invite parents to respond on the bottom half.

Telephones — Additional telephone lines in the school enable teachers to contact parents on a regular basis, sharing "good and bad" news. Additionally, schools could use these lines to conduct random surveys to gather information on parents' concerns.

Home Visits — Principal, teachers or other parents make home visits to exchange information with parents.

Parent-Teacher Conferences — Schools strive for 100% attendance at parent-teacher conferences and plan carefully to accommodate parent schedules and child care needs and to provide information that is of importance to parents.

Course Outlines — High school teachers send their course outlines home with students, including information on homework expectations and how and when teachers can be contacted.

Informal Drop-in Hours/Discussion Sessions — Principals have set aside office hours when, without an appointment, they will meet with parents. In addition, informal coffee or dessert sessions are held with small groups of parents who are invited in to share their perspectives on the school.

2. PARENTS AS SUPPORTERS

There are many support roles that parents can play in the life of the school:

- *Attending student performances and award assemblies*
- *Volunteering in the school through chaperoning field trips, organizing special events, fund-raising activities, etc.*
- *Organizing child care for school events*
- *Running a parent information center*

Effective parent support programs are often related to how welcome and comfortable parents feel in the school, how recognized their efforts are, and how well they are informed about the various support opportunities that are available.

Approaches to Encouraging Support Roles for Parents

Signs — "Welcome Parents" signs in the entry way to the school.

New Parent Orientation — Tours and orientation sessions at the school for parents of new students.

Parents' Lounge/Space — A parents' lounge in the school; a parents' corner in the library with reading materials for parents on parenting, child development issues, and activities at the school.

Job Descriptions — Varied and flexible jobs descriptions for parent volunteers, published in the parent newsletter.

Information/Referral Services — Information and referral services for parents who need after-school child care, organized by parents.

Telephone Trees — Parent-operated telephone trees that organize car-pooling for special activities or field trips.

Monthly Luncheons — Monthly parent-teacher lunches held in the school cafeteria.

Parents' Awards Banquet — Annual banquets hosted by schools to honor parent volunteers and present them with special awards.

3. PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Increasing attention is being given to the role of parents as teachers, both within the school and at home. Parents are being utilized within the classroom to present special lessons and to tutor students in reading comprehension, math, computers, and other areas. To help parents feel confident playing paraprofessional roles within the school, some schools are providing training and orientation sessions.

Parents are being urged to read to or with their children, talk with them about homework, take them on field trips, and provide structured homework time for them. Parents are also being encouraged to help their children at home through home-learning activities such as games and assignments which invite parent participation. To assist parents in engaging their children in these ways, several strategies have been developed.

Strategies to Enhance Teaching Roles for Parents

Parent Talent Banks — Parent talent banks have been created to provide supplementary art, music, drama, and recreation instruction.

Multicultural Enrichment Programs — Parents coordinate multicultural enrichment programs for students which include inviting parents from different cultural and ethnic groups to share stories, songs, and materials.

Home-Reading Programs — Parents participate in home-reading programs with their children in which they agree to read with or to young children or to validate the reading of older children. Sometimes these programs are designed as competitions that offer prizes or awards for exceptional achievement.

(continued)

Civic/Work Experience Sharing — Parents of students at all grade levels are invited to share information about their civic or work experience. Parents' places of employment are asked to provide release time that enables single and working parents to participate in these programs and play a more visible role in the school.

Drug and Alcohol Teachers — Middle school parents have been trained to teach and talk with students about adolescent issues such as drugs and alcohol and to conduct substance abuse prevention programs in the school.

Home-Learning Activities — Parents of young children are given assistance in developing home-learning games from available materials. Homework activities that invite parent participation are sent home with children.

Tutoring — Parents or other community volunteers are trained in tutoring children in specific areas, such as math or computers, and to spend several hours a week working with children one-on-one or in groups.

4. PARENTS AS LEARNERS

Parents can be involved as learners in the school through (a) learning more about the school's programs and (b) learning for themselves how to be more effective as parents and as adults. Many parents are eager to learn how they can help their children with adolescent issues, academic issues, and other specialized problems. Schools can address this interest of parents through offering a broad range of adult education opportunities: parenting training, child development, computer skills, English as a Second Language, etc. Schools can provide forums in which parents, teachers and students learn from each other through discussion and interaction on a variety of timely issues. Schools are using the following approaches to offering educational opportunities for their parents:

Approaches to Offering Educational Opportunities for Parents

- **Parent-Education Workshops** — These sessions are most effective when they are designed to address parent interests that have been identified through a questionnaire or other survey method, are held at times convenient for most parents, provide child care, and are scheduled well in advance with follow up phone confirmation. Workshops for parents are frequently structured as ongoing series that are followed with support group meetings targeted at specific populations such as single parents, parents of children with special needs, etc.
- **Class-level or Targeted Workshops** — Sessions that are targeted toward special populations in the school are often better attended than school-wide workshops. Individual teachers may host sessions specifically for the parents of children in their classes; guidance counselors may invite all eighth grade parents to a workshop on how to help their children make the transition to high school. These sessions are often better attended than more general school-wide workshops.
- **Adult Education Opportunities** — Classes in writing, computers, swimming, English, and other self-improvement areas are offered to parents at the school.
- **Family Educational Opportunities** — Special learning opportunities are offered to the whole family such as family math nights, family computer nights, substance abuse workshops, and seminars on improving communication between parents and their children.
- **School or Class Observation** — Parents are invited into the school to "shadow" their students, sit in on their children's classes and experience a school day. These opportunities can help parents better understand the differences in elementary, middle, and high schools.
- **Field Trips** — Parents are invited on field trips to museums and historical or recreational sites. In familiarizing parents with community resources, schools are encouraging them to use these resources to enhance the experiences of their children.
- **Video or Television Programs** — Local cable access television is providing a way to reach many parents. Parent education programs feature call-in times during which parents ask questions. Also, parents are given recommendations on video programs or television programs that might be of special interest to their children. Some schools also lend parents material from their own video libraries.

5. PARENTS AS ADVISORS AND DECISION-MAKERS

When parents are involved in their children's schools as advisors and decision-makers, they influence the quality of education in the school, a specific program within the school, or activities in a classroom. Parents are involved in schools' decision-making through school site councils, ad hoc problem solving committees, advocacy or monitoring programs, and through individual problem-solving negotiations. Many opportunities already exist for parent participation through mechanisms such as School Improvement Councils, Chapter One Advisory Councils, and Bilingual Education Advisory Councils.

Ways of Involving Parents as Advisors and Decision-Makers

- **Problem-solving Committees** — Representative groups of parents, students, and faculty are convened to look into critical issues, such as teen alcohol abuse, and draft action plans for the school.
- **Planning Committees** — In some communities, parents have been invited to help create a school improvement plan for a particular school.
- **Advocacy Groups** — In some communities, parents have researched school budget issues with assistance from the administration, made budget recommendations, and convened public forums for the community on budget issues.
- **Policy Committees** — Groups of parents have been recruited to examine and draft policy statements on issues such as discipline and teacher evaluation. These drafts are circulated to other parents and teachers for comment and revision to insure that they represent a broad spectrum of parent opinion.
- **Hiring and Evaluation Committees** — Parents have been asked to serve on search committees that are recommending new hires and evaluation teams that are reviewing existing staff.
- **Individual Problem-solving Sessions** — Parents are called in as resources to help teachers develop a plan of action in the event of academic or behavioral problems with their children. In some cases a third party, such as a counselor, may offer to assist the process.

A COMMITMENT TO ALL PARENTS

In thinking about parent involvement, it is important to recognize that some parents will be easier to reach than others. Effective parent involvement means making a commitment to *all* parents. Children of the hardest-to-reach parents may have the most to gain from school-parent collaboration. Schools, therefore, need to focus special attention on parents who work outside the home, low-income parents, single parents, divorced parents without custody, parents of minority race or language, and others who pose special situations. Schools that have demonstrated a commitment to all parents have used a range of approaches:

1. **Teacher Training** — Teachers are trained to work with divorced and racially and culturally diverse parents.

2. **Specialized Parent Coordinator** — Coordinators, hired from the community to work with bilingual parents, meet with parents in their homes, churches, and other gathering places to talk about school-related issues.

3. **Neighborhood Parent Center** — Parent centers are established in neighborhood multi-purpose facilities close to the school. These centers have written information for parents such as community directories which list local parent and child services. Parent centers are staffed evenings and weekends, offer programs for bilingual parents, and provide advice and encouragement on how to work with teachers and administrators within the school.

4. **Non-Custodial Parent Arrangements** — Non-custodial parents of children are put on schools' mailing lists.

5. **Flexible Parent-Teacher Conference Options** — Parent-teacher conference options are available in the evenings and on weekend days to accommodate parents' work schedules.

6. **Home Visits** — Teachers, outreach workers, and parent volunteers make home visits to talk with parents who may be intimidated by coming into the school.

7. **Transportation and Child Care** — Transportation and child care are provided by the school for school-based activities.

8. **Training/Hiring Parents as Paraprofessionals** — Low-income parents who cannot afford to work on a volunteer basis are trained and hired as paraprofessionals in the school.

9. **School-Based Literacy/Family Nights** — Literacy and other adult education programs are offered in schools with activities for children, such as homework tutoring and recreational activities, available at the same time.

CONCLUSIONS

Some of these forms of parent involvement have a more direct "payoff" with respect to student achievement than do others. For example, research shows a direct link between parents' engagement of their children in home-learning activities and school sources. The relationship between student achievement and parent participation in decision-making in the school is less easily measured. It is clear, however, that parent participation in the schools helps to enhance the image of the school in the community, stretches limited school resources, builds stronger programs, and defuses distrust in the educational system.

Schools with effective home-school collaboration use a combination of strategies from all of the five categories of parent involvement. All forms of parent involvement in the schools flourish only when the principal and the school system actively promote and support the idea of home-school partnerships. Teachers and principals have great difficulty in establishing significant connections with parents unless they are given the time, training and resources to do so. Schools that are successful put structures in place and designate personnel to support parent involvement efforts. Schools and school systems can support parent involvement efforts in several ways:

- *Substitutes/Release Time* — Principals fill in for teachers who are meeting with parents, hire substitute teachers during parent-conferences, release teachers from homeroom or lunch duty to make telephone calls to parents, and give them one day a month to make home visits.

- *In-Service* — Several in-service sessions per year are provided to help teachers learn skills for working with and utilizing parents.

- *Child Care* — Principals set aside discretionary funds to cover child care costs for all school functions.

- *Teacher Stipends* — School systems pay teachers to work during the summer to develop home-learning resources and activities.

- *Teacher Communication Materials* — Schools provide stationery, forms, post cards, notebooks, and stamps for teacher to use in communicating with parents.

- *Parent Liaisons* — School systems hire personnel, such as parent liaisons, to coordinate and assist with parent involvement efforts in each building in the system.

The partnership between home and school has always been important but, because of the times in which we live, has taken on an even more critical function. School people and parents need each other. Education cannot be separated from the rest of a child's life. Neither the school alone nor the parents alone will be able to deal with the complex issues facing children today. The best thing we can do for children and for our educational system is to cooperate — school and family — in the educational process.

SECTION THREE
PROFILES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Strategy	Focus	School	No.	Profile
Home-School Communication	1) Developing a systematic teacher outreach mechanism to families of children identified as "at risk"	Waltham Middle Schools	#1	The Challenge Program
	2) Implementing a school-wide home visitation program	George S. Paine School	#2	Home Visitation Program
	3) Parent outreach to bilingual parents	Milford Public Schools	#3	Parent Outreach
Parents as Supporters/Parent Support	4) Using video to increase parent attendance at open houses	John F. Parker Middle School	#4	Open House
	5) Assisting bilingual parents and children with career guidance and college planning	New Bedford High School	#5	Career Guidance
Parents as Teachers	6) Involving parents and grandparents in teaching computer skills in the classroom	Longmeadow Public Schools	#6	Computer Tutors
	7) Providing support and instruction in math tutoring to parents of minority children	King School	#7	New Algebra Program
	8) Creating a summer home learning kit for parents and children	Kirtland School	#8	Boredom Busters
Parents as Learners	9) Developing parent, student and teacher learning seminars	Bancroft School	#9	Paideia Seminars
	10) Parent education program corresponding to students' curriculum on adolescent issues	White Brook Middle School	#10	ESOPP Program
	11) Creating a successful beginning of the year parent orientation	Peabody School	#11	Peabody Kick-Off
Parents as Advisors and Decision Makers	12) Involving parents in selecting school personnel	Attleboro Public Schools	#12	Central Parents Organization

PROFILE 1: THE CHALLENGE PROGRAM

SCHOOL: Waltham Middle Schools

CONTACT: Nancy Hoover, Program Coordinator
Waltham Public Schools
488 Main Street
Waltham, MA 02254
(617) 899-9110

FOCUS: Developing a systematic teacher outreach mechanism to families of children identified as at risk of dropping out of school.

HISTORY: The Challenge Program grew out of the efforts of Dave Emerson, the Supervisor of Attendance. He conducted a needs assessment (funded by a grant from the state) that showed that poor attendance, followed by dropping out, were major problems in the Waltham Schools. An advisory board of teachers and administrators was formed to study the program. It concluded that the focus should be on prevention and the critical years of the 7th and 8th grades. A program coordinator, Nancy Hoover, was chosen to oversee the program. Ten weeks of planning followed, after which the advisory board met with parents to introduce the program and solicit comments. In November, 1987, the program was initiated.

PROFILE: In this program, each of the three middle schools operates relatively autonomously under the general guidelines set forth by the advisory board. A list of potentially at risk students is compiled by a "team cluster" of teachers who have agreed to participate in the Challenge program. The teachers look at attendance, grades, and the student's background. The lists are then submitted to a selection team which consists of an "adjustment counselor," the guidance counselor, and administrator, two to four teachers from each cluster, and the "challenge teachers." The selection team de-

termines the most at risk students from the lists. The challenge teacher then contacts the students and their parents.

Each building has adopted its own method of approaching the students and parents. One building has made an effort to avoid labeling children as "problem children" and has stressed improved performance. In this building, the first step consisted of a face to face interview with the parents and the child. This approach has been particularly successful — nineteen of twenty-one students have gone on to participate in the challenge program.

When parents and students agree to participate in the program, they both sign a contract with the challenge teacher. The children choose the goals that they will meet. They may stay after school to work with one of the teachers on improving their grades, for example. The challenge teacher maintains ongoing communication with the students and the parents to monitor progress and help in resolving problems.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- Children get the sense that they matter and parents see that the school is concerned about their children.
- One-on-one contact between children and teachers has been established.
- Formal relations have been established between mental health and alcohol treatment centers for special programs.
- In two out of three buildings, the program has been accepted as vital and has the full support of the teachers and administration.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Planning and preparation must start well in advance so that the program can be implemented at the start of the school year.
- The program should be continually evaluated so that ineffective approaches can be eliminated.

PROFILE 2: HOME VISITATION PROGRAM

SCHOOL: George S. Paine School

CONTACT: Charles Crivellaro, Principal
George S. Paine School
211 Crescent Street
Brockton, MA 02402
(617) 580-7287

FOCUS: Implementing a school-wide home visitation program.

HISTORY: Before the current principal came to the Paine School fifteen years ago, volatile situations existed between parents and the school. The community did not trust the school or administration and there had been unpleasant interactions between parents and teachers. In order to overcome this problem, the new principal instituted a teacher home visitation program to open channels of communication.

PROFILE: At the time the home visitation program was initiated, the ratio of teachers to students was relatively high (1:15). This staffing made it possible for teachers to team up for teaching, freeing one teacher to leave the school each week and visit parents in their homes. By the end of the first month of the program, every teacher had participated in home visits, even those who had originally been hesitant or unwilling. By the end of the year, every family in the school had met personally with either one of the teachers or the principal, who also regularly visited homes.

The intention of the visits was to establish positive communication channels. The school sought information from a research and consulting firm on current articles and practice concerning home visitation. Through this information and further discussion, staff developed a sense of the kind of meetings with parents that would be most beneficial in creating trust. Teachers never went into homes to discuss prob-

lems with the students' performance in school. Their purpose was to let parents know that the school wanted what was best for the children and that it was there to provide support for learning — not act in an adversial role toward children or parents.

Families were contacted concerning the visits through letters, phone calls, and notices brought home by the children. If parents absolutely refused to allow either the principal or a teacher into their home, they were encouraged to come into the school. Every effort was made to accommodate their schedule.

The program was very successful. Although the school still has the problems of other inner-city low income communities, the atmosphere in the school is one of trust and learning. The school budget cuts of past years have produced a much higher student/teacher ratio, resulting in no home visitation program on a regular basis. Trust was built, however, and now it is much easier to get parents to come into the school on a regular basis.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- Parents call the principal on a regular basis whenever there is a school-related problem with their children.
- An atmosphere of learning and trust has been created.
- Changed attitudes are apparent on the part of both parents and teachers.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- There must be support from the administration to keep staffing at a level that makes the program possible.
- Support and training must be in place for teachers who are initially unwilling to be involved. It is important that all faculty take part in visits.

PROFILE 3: PARENT OUTREACH

SCHOOL: Milford Public Schools

CONTACT: Leonard Oliveri, Bilingual Program Director
Milford Public Schools
31 West Fountain Street
Milford, MA 01757
(617) 478-4236

FOCUS: Parent outreach to bilingual parents.

HISTORY: The Bilingual Education Program was first instituted at the Milford Schools in 1971. Since then, under the directorship of Mr. Leonard Oliveri, it has evolved beyond being a bilingual program into a strong parent outreach program. Mr. Oliveri understood that effective outreach into the community was critical for the success of the program. He was able to enlist the help of parents in making the bridge between the school and the community. Parent volunteers are now an essential part of the program and add an important dimension to it.

PROFILE: One of the first tasks that the parent volunteers in the Bilingual Program perform is to make sure that the parents of children who do not speak English as a first language are informed of the program. This outreach involves translating documents and going into the community to talk with parents first-hand. Volunteers make sure that parents understand how to enroll their children in the program and assist them in doing so. Because enrolling students at the earliest possible age is important, there is currently a drive to register kindergarten students.

Parent volunteers also act as a critical liaison between the school and the minority families of the community. Most of the parent volunteers are minorities themselves and understand the issues and sensitivities of minority groups. Through the volunteers, parents of children who do not speak English as a first language are able to ask questions,

make suggestions, and register complaints. Parent volunteers also help other parents feel more comfortable about dealing with the school. By having someone approach them who is familiar with their language, the natural language barrier is broken down and a greater trust is built between the school and the minority families. Parent volunteers also serve as a direct link between the families and the teachers and go into classrooms to observe and make comments.

ACHIEVEMENT/OUTCOMES:

- Language minority students are helped in transitioning into the school and with understanding English.
- Language minority students are more willing and better able to interact with the school.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- There needs to be a coordinated effort between the school, parents, and the community.
- The involvement of language minority parents as volunteers is essential.

PROFILE 4: OPEN HOUSE

SCHOOL: John F. Parker Middle School

CONTACT: Edmond Teixeira, Principal
Parker Middle School
50 Williams Street
Taunton, MA 02780
(617) 823-8181

FOCUS: Using video to increase parent attendance at open houses.

HISTORY: Getting parents to attend school open houses is always a challenging matter. The Parker Middle School is taking advantage of the video camcorder bought for it by the

Parker School Improvement Council to encourage parents' attendance. As the Parker School is located within Taunton High School, Parker School children have the unique opportunity of being able to access the high school's TV studio.

PROFILE: Edmond Teixeira, Principal of the Parker Middle School, decided to create an innovative orientation video to show to the PTO and at school open houses. He decided to involve some of the children, particularly the eighth graders who had received some videotaping instruction from the high school, in the production. Teixeira felt that if parents knew their children could be in the video or were involved in the production, they might be interested in coming to the school to see it.

The Principal and the students have been recording all the major events of the year at the school. Footage has been shot of a Space Lab being installed at the school, the Honors Brunch, the Sports Awards, and classes in session. Footage will be shot for the rest of the year at such events as the Science Fair and graduation. In this way, the orientation video can be constantly updated to stay current, parents can expect to see their children on screen, and major events in the life of the school are recorded.

The video was shown to the PTO and at the Open House. It proved to be a highly successful item in attracting record numbers of parents to the school. The video provided an effective way for the principal to orient parents to the school and to showcase the children.

OUTCOMES/ACHIEVEMENTS:

- The video was successful in getting parents to come to the school.
- Student participation in producing the video added to the excitement of seeing the final product.
- The video can be produced at little expense and constantly revised to keep it current.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Easy access to equipment is a must for this project.
- A commitment of time will be needed to record major events at the school.
- The principal or someone will spend large amounts of time editing the final product.

PROFILE 5: CAREER GUIDANCE

SCHOOL: New Bedford High School

CONTACT: Dr. Warren Berube
Educational Opportunity Center
106 Spring Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
(617) 996-3147

FOCUS: Assisting bilingual parents and children with career guidance and college planning.

HISTORY: Typically, bilingual or "minority" students get little support and assistance in deciding about their post-secondary education. During 1986, the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) of New Bedford did an assessment of the vocational guidance needs in the New Bedford Schools. At first, EOC envisioned a non-school based program. After starting with churches and social service agencies, they decided it was essential to work with the schools.

PROFILE: The Health/Careers Program, located at the Educational Opportunity Center, provides consultants who work at New Bedford High School with the principal, the guidance department, and with junior and senior students and their families. Using a case management approach, bilingual counselors identify and recruit targeted students who want to go on to college. Each counselor maintains a caseload of approximately 10 students. During the Spring semes-

ter, the program recruits juniors, who are interested in attending college, by arranging bus trips to colleges for groups. A counselor accompanies the groups on the trips and, accompanied by college staff, gives students a brief tour. Approximately five trips are planned throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, eligible and interested students are invited by the counselors to become part of the program.

Counselors meet with students for a few visits to get acquainted with them personally and academically. On the fourth visit, they visit children's parents at their home to introduce themselves and inform families of their services and of the goals of the program. Counselors work with their students for an average of 18 months. When it comes time to apply for financial assistance, counselors assist students and their families in filling out the forms and in understanding the application process. Much of the counselors' work relates to assuring families that they need not give up high academic goals because of financial needs and that financial concerns should remain secondary to getting into the best possible college of their child's choice. After the application period, counselors work closely with families to assist them with any questions or problems arising from the application process.

ACHIEVEMENT/OUTCOME:

- The program has a very high college acceptance record for students. During 1986, 31 of the 32 students in the program were accepted into the college of their choice. In 1987, 52 of the 56 Seniors in the program went on to college.

CONSIDERATION:

- It is very important to have the makeup of the staff reflect the population it is to serve. The ethnicity of the director was a barrier until credibility was established through the hiring of six bilingual counselors.

PROFILE 6: COMPUTER TUTORS

SCHOOL: Longmeadow Public Schools

CONTACT: Mary Ann Sedran, Computer Coordinator
82 Tecumseh Drive
Longmeadow, MA 01106
(413) 567-5941

FOCUS: Involving parents and grandparents in teaching computer skills in the classroom.

HISTORY: Teachers of non and new readers (K-2) focus nearly all their attention on the regular curriculum, with little time left to help individual students work on in-class computers. Rather than seeing the computers as learning tools, some teachers see them as distractions, toys, and sources of classroom conflict. Mary Ann Sedran sought to alleviate the strain on classroom teachers of having unused computers by enlisting the aid of parent and grandparent volunteers who assist students on the computers.

PROFILE: Mary Ann Sedran teaches volunteer parents and grandparents to use software available for grades K-3 and to understand the needs/goals of classroom teachers for their assistance. They learn to be helpers, not outsiders who interfere with class routines. These volunteers, recruited by their children and grandchildren, include breast-feeding moms who bring their infants, lawyers who leave to try cases, and senior citizens who are learning computer literacy along with their pupils. They volunteer for one period (usually from 2-4 hours) each week. Mary Ann does the contracting, scheduling, and training of these volunteers and spends one period with each of them as they join "their" class and get to know their students and their supervising teacher. Volunteers usually work one-on-one with students, teaching and helping them to use the software. Through this program, the computers are being utilized through most of the school day without the direct involvement of the regular classroom teacher who is free to work with individuals and groups on other tasks.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- Parents and grandparents see their children in a new context and get the teacher's view of their children. They also gain more empathy for their children's experience as they go through school.
- Parents, grandparents and teachers get to know each other, leading to better school-home communication and support.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Schedule class-wide activities so that they do not take place when the computer parents/grandparents are at school.
- Schedule a rotating parent/grandparent substitute each day to cover for the inevitable situation of a parent with a sick child or an important business conflict.

PROFILE 7: NEW ALGEBRA PROGRAM

SCHOOL: King School

CONTACT: Lena James, Parent Liaison
King School
100 Putnam Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 498-9263

FOCUS: Providing support and instruction in math tutoring to parents of minority children.

HISTORY: The New Algebra Program grew out of the efforts of Bob Moses, a parent of children in the King School and a doctoral candidate at Harvard. From volunteering time teaching regular Algebra at the King School, Moses learned how important it is for minority children, in particular, to have the supports they need in order to develop a solid math background.

PROFILE: The New Algebra Program provides daily tutoring for the approximately thirty-five 7th and 8th graders at the school who choose to participate. Approximately 35 students appear for tutoring. Members of the Seymour Society, a local community organization, have taken on this tutoring role as their community work. Moses meets with these community volunteers to provide supervision.

The parent component of the program has developed in two areas:

- Parent Tutoring Program — On Saturdays from 8:30-9:30 a.m., a free lesson in Algebra is offered for parents. These lessons help parents to help their children.
- Honors Bound Program — Parents gather once a month to focus on helping their children achieve academically. Parents discuss issues relevant to parenting, helping their children with math, and providing support to each other. On occasion, they also have guest speakers.

An outgrowth of the New Algebra Program is the study cell concept, which provides supportive study environments for groups of children at neighborhood homes.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- The New Algebra program has involved significant numbers of students and parents in improving math achievement.
- This program is helping parents learn how to help their children succeed and achieve academically.
- The program is becoming recognized; Wheelock College is hoping to collaborate with the school to expand the program further.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- The success of this program is in large part due to the effort put in by Robert Moses, a volunteer parent.
- Success is also due to locating a community organization that was willing to take on a major tutoring role for children on a volunteer basis.

PROFILE 8: BOREDOM BUSTERS

SCHOOL: Kirtland School

CONTACT: Pauline Carrier, Parent Coordinator
Kirtland School
298 Sargeant Street
Holyoke, MA 01040
(413) 534-2065

FOCUS: Creating a summer home learning kit for parents and children.

HISTORY: The "Boredom Busters" summer home learning program at the Kirtland School is part of a city-wide project that was developed last summer by the Chapter One Parent Coordinator. The program was developed in response to teacher complaints that students' study skills often regressed over the summer months. This regression was particularly true for students, doing remedial work, who were already one or two grades behind. The Parent Coordinator came up with the "Boredom Busters" kits in order to get parents involved with their children's schoolwork over the summer.

PROFILE:

The "Boredom Busters" summer home learning program is primarily a contract agreement made between parents and students whereby both consent to work on study skills over the summer. The program involves first through sixth graders. Each student agrees to spend time on a certain amount of work each day and the parent agrees to monitor this progress. A Student-Parent Consent Form must be signed in order to obtain the "Boredom Busters" kit.

Parents are informed about the program in the monthly newsletter. A contract is then sent home to interested families. At the end of the academic year, "Boredom Busters" kits are given to students who have brought in signed contracts. Last year over five hundred parents throughout the city reponded.

The "Boredom Busters" kits are designed by a steering committee of teacher volunteers who select a series of educational materials, including flashcards, math and reading worksheets, and other "fun" assignments for the children. The kit also contains information for parents on how to help with specific topics such as teaching phonics. A calendar with different activities for parents to do with their child each day of the summer vacation, including day trips and educational events, is also included. An enormous effort is made to make the kits as attractive as possible. Kits come in vinyl covers and contain "Boredom Busters" buttons for the participating children to wear.

At the end of the summer, when students return to school, they are requested to turn in the kits so that teachers may check the work. In October, a special appreciation night buffet dinner is held for all participants who completed the work, including parents. Certificates are issued to these participants and a booklet is distributed with all of their names.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- Parent response is very favorable.
- There is noticeable improvement in schoolwork for participating students.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Special "advertising" touches such as the buttons are important for inspiring interest in the program.
- Parents are able to be involved because the program takes place at home.

PROFILE 9: PAIDEIA SEMINARS

SCHOOL: Bancroft School

CONTACT: Irene Crane
Bancroft School
Bancroft Road
Andover, MA 01810
(617) 470-1700 Ext. 240

FOCUS: Developing parent, student and teacher learning seminars.

HISTORY: Mortimer Adler developed the Paideia Seminars as structured literature study groups based on the concept that there are no right or wrong answers and no one has to risk put-downs and feeling foolish. The concept was first used at the Bancroft School as a team-building activity for administrators, with the additional benefit that it put administrators into the learning role to experience first-hand what they would be asking their students and faculty to do. The administrators, who started off studying Antigone, enjoyed the experience so much that they extended it to teachers, then to teachers and students, and finally to teachers, students and parents.

PROFILE: Irene Crane, a teacher at the Bancroft School, is responsible for the Paideia Seminars at her school. She has assembled and trained a volunteer group of parents, teachers, and students to serve as workshop facilitators. These facilitators meet with Crane once a month to critique the program, plan the activities, and upgrade their skills as facilitators. They run regular discussion sessions for mixed groups of parents, teachers and students. Video tapes are made of each session to share the concept with others. These tapes also serve as training materials for developing the skills of existing and new facilitators. The seminars use the regular reading assignment of students' curriculum and enable the parents to enjoy discussion on the materials their children are reading.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- A chance for parents and children to have discussions on topics other than the issues of family life.
- An opportunity for parents to be involved in learning taking place at school.
- A chance for students to learn and appreciate how their parents think on topics that might not otherwise arise.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- The Paideia Seminars are a process; there is no end product.
- It helps to find someone from another school who has tried the Paideia Seminars to come and speak to the PTO, show videos, and help generate understanding and enthusiasm.

PROFILE 10: THE ESOPP PROGRAM

SCHOOL: White Brook Middle School

CONTACT: Marianne Dornan, Counselor
White Brook Middle School
200 Park Street
Easthampton, MA 01027
(413) 527-6000

FOCUS: Parent education program corresponding to students' curriculum on adolescent issues.

HISTORY: The guidance staff at the White Brook Middle School, in conjunction with Sojourn, a community-based multi-service agency for youth, developed the Easthampton Sojourn Prevention Program (ESOPP) partnership to provide education and counseling services to adolescents. The ESOPP program is mandatory for 6th and 7th graders and optional for 8th graders. The curriculum deals with adolescent issues such as stress, sexuality, health information, and values clarification. It also includes a counseling and referral component. This program has been enormously successful with students. Last year, a parent component was developed

to provide continuity between the school curriculum and the home and to give parents skills for dealing with their adolescents.

PROFILE: The primary goals of the parent component of the ESOPP program are to offer parents an opportunity to develop skills and information for dealing with their adolescent children, assist in parent/student interaction, provide continuity between school and home, and provide support for parents.

The counseling staff at the middle school hired a facilitator with teaching and curriculum development experience to design a six part workshop which would complement the ESOPP program. The program was also co-facilitated by one of the counselors in case funding for the facilitator was not continued. The program is currently funded by the Commonwealth Inservice Institute, Chapter 188 and the Easthampton Home/School Association.

The parent program includes six two-hour sessions offered weekly from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Each session is designed to be a self-contained learning experience, in case parents could not attend all six sessions, and corresponds directly to what the 6th and 7th graders are learning in the ESOPP program in school. Last year, the six sessions included the following topics: understanding your relationship with your adolescent, improving communication skills for talking with your child, listening to your adolescent, discipline (daily skills for dealing with child's behavior), setting and maintaining limits with your child, and dealing with "tough issues" (alcohol, drugs and sex).

The workshops alternate between current issues the students are studying and skill oriented goals for better parenting. The agenda is mainly activity-oriented with a mini-lecture and then hands-on work such as group brainstorming and role-play. Each session also includes an opportunity for parents to evaluate the program.

Parents are contacted in a monthly mailing which outlines the calendar of topics to be covered. The mailings also include printed materials related to the issues.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- Parents report better communication with children.
- Parents become involved in their children's education.
- Parents share information with other parents who do not attend the sessions.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- It is important that workshops are both practical and theoretical.
- It is difficult attracting parents for the entire six weeks. The possibility of fewer but longer sessions is being considered.
- It is less threatening to present this program as workshops and not "counseling" sessions.

PROFILE 11: PEABODY KICK-OFF

SCHOOL: Peabody School

CONTACT: Debbie Pugatch, Parent Liaison
Peabody School
44 Linnaean Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 498-9266

FOCUS: Creating a successful beginning of the year parent orientation.

HISTORY: The Peabody Kick-Off Meeting took three years to develop. In the past, a beginning of the year open house was held in which the principal spoke and parents could tour the school. In order to create a more meaningful event, the Teacher-Parent Steering Committee proposed that teachers become more intimately involved and that the event provide a place for dialogue between parents and teachers. Teachers agreed with this idea and helped to shift the focus to facilitating parent-teacher communication with as many parents as possible at the beginning of the school year.

PROFILE: The Kick-Off Meeting is held approximately one week after school begins in the fall. The event begins with a welcoming speech from the principal and other guests. Parents then go to their children's classroom, where teachers presents an overview of their goals and curriculum for the year. Parents can ask questions and engage in dialogue with teachers about their children's upcoming educational experience. This event also provides an opportunity for parents to meet each other.

In order to ensure that all parents can attend, transportation is available to any parent who needs it and child care is available at the school. Publicity for the event is comprehensive. Every home receives a mailing before school starts. The weekly parent newsletter contains information about the event and the principal reminds children over the PA to tell their parents about the Kick-Off. The expectation is established that every parent in the school will be there. Out of 325 families, more than 250 came for this year's event. The success of the event is based on the fact that the Kick-Off meeting delivers information parents need and is made highly accessible.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

- The percentage of parents participating in this event is remarkable.
- The school has successfully been able to set up the expectation that all parents will attend.
- The event attracted a diverse group of parents into the school.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Teachers must be brought into this idea to make it a success.
- The school must be willing to provide the resources of transportation and child care.
- The success of the event is based on the degree to which it is organized to provide parents needed and specific information and opportunity for dialogue.

PROFILE 12: CENTRAL PARENTS ORGANIZATION

SCHOOL: Attleboro Public Schools

CONTACT: Dr. Bart O'Connor, Superintendent
Attleboro Public Schools
Rathbun Willard Drive
Attleboro, MA 02703
(617) 222-0012

FOCUS: Involving parents in selecting school personnel.

HISTORY: Since his appointment as Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Bart O'Connor has worked to involve parents as partners in decision-making about the schools. He founded the Central Parents Organization, composed of parents, teachers and the principal from each school in the system, to serve as a network to keep stakeholders abreast of system-wide issues and decisions. This organization evolved into a series of task forces on upgrading and building school facilities; analyzing, developing, and lobbying for school budgets; creating policies city-wide; and developing handbooks for parents, students and teachers, etc.

PROFILE: The concept behind involving parents in school personnel hiring was to give parents parity (not all the power, but an equal share in decision-making) in the process of selecting school administrators, such as Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, other key system-wide personnel, individual school principals, and specialty staff such as athletic coaches, music and drama coaches, etc. Participating parents are chosen as follows:

- one from the Central Parent's Organization
- one from each of the local PTO's
- one from the Special Needs Committee
- if possible, a Chapter One parent.

Parents and teachers go through a series of training sessions in which they learn what is expected of them; help to design job descriptions and job specifications; brainstorm the kinds

of personnel they are looking for and where to find them; and develop interview questions that will assess the qualities which they seek. They then participate with the Superintendent of Schools in the recruiting and selecting of personnel.

ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES:

(from the parents' point of view)

- Parents become educated about the roles of administrators in the schools.
- Parents get the feeling that they shape schools and that their help is wanted.
- Parents feel comfortable with the schools.

(from the staff's point of view)

- Staff gains a sense of partnership with parents for the benefit of the students.
- In these times of eroding confidence in public agencies, parent involvement with the schools helps to build trust in school personnel.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- Give parents a significant role. Be prepared to spend time. Parent involvement in decision-making will not happen overnight.
- Leadership has to come from the top. Be sincere in believing that it is important to include the parents.
- Use training vehicles. Spend money on outside consultants or internal personnel to help train parents. Spend money on coffee and donuts.
- Hook parents when their children start kindergarten, which is when they are the most motivated to be involved.
- Do not be discouraged with just a few active parents. Be willing to work with whom you have and develop them.

SECTION FOUR
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